2: Mitchell E-5 (1946-1949) 1956 FT7 Yao FT7

rubes (a grown sort unlike a woman's dressing-gown), wears a bright-coloured turban, and has one or two men walking behind him, he is a rather important village headman. One particular item of clothing in the Kowinga, Liwonde and Nyambi areas, is the scarlet headband which some village headmen may wear. I shall discuss this later in the context of the competition of village headmen for rank.

Another external characteristic of rank, which seems to have disappeared with the changing economic structure of Nyasaland, was the carrying of knives (*mingio*) by important village headmen. Previously, status was indicated by the type and size of knife carried in public. The chief usually carried the largest and most ornate. The knife taken from Kowinga on his surrender in Portuguese East Africa was about 18 inches long and had a decorated ivory handle. Smaller knives of similar pattern belonged to his headmen.[1] Nowadays, many young commoners carry knives two or even three feet long, made from the broken blades of motor-car springs.

The right of important village headmen to build fences[2] at the back of their huts is also a mark of prestige which seems to have lost its significance. About 30 years ago only important headmen had the right to erect a fence at the back of their huts. This fence, made of tall grass about six feet high, enclosed the grain stores and other food supplies of the household and formed a private compound in which the headman's wife and slaves carried on their daily tasks.[3] It seems likely that private compounds and slavery were positively associated, so that only the important village headmen who had many slaves found it necessary to build fences. All chiefs and most important headmen to-day still erect these fences. Those who hold initiation rights are obliged to build them because, when the initiands return from the seclusion phase of the initiation ceremony, they are supposed to spend one night in the headman's private compound before going back to their villages. But nowadays, minor village headmen and commoners also frequently build these

[1] See fn. 4, Chap. II, p. 36.

[2] *Linga*, pl. *mlinga*. The enclosed space or "compound" is *mlomdi*. Typical hut compounds are depicted on Plate IX (*a*) and (*b*), facing p. 101.

[3] MacDonald suggests that the common term *bwato* for woman is derived from the adverb *bwato*—on the other side (of the fence).

Both before and after the introduction of guns, the Yao used spears, tipsaps, and bows. 410
ehanjo. The spear is a five foot long thrusting spear with metal head and wooden shaft. No shield was used. Bows and arrows are made from the wood of the tree or pinkingado tree. The string is made of rawhide. A double-bulbed bow called ehanjo ser ehkwee was sometimes used, but, I believe, originally came from the Anjoonjo. The arrows, especially, have a metal arrow-head, and were often poisoned with kwala.

Hunting. The same weapons are used in hunting: the gun, the spear, and the bow and arrow. Smaller bows and arrows made with bamboo or reed shaft are also employed for shooting birds; one of the arrows has a blunt wooden head and serves to stun the bird. 224 411

From the Anjoonjo, the Yao learned the use of a harpoon for spearing the hippopotamus. The harpoon is a heavy spear-head of iron about eighteen inches long, attached to a rope and float. From the Anjoonjo, also, was learned the use of the killing block with spear for killing hippo. [217]

Elephants are caught in staked pits, and the larger carnivora are similarly trapped in pits with the sides sloping towards towards the bottom, so that as the animal falls lower and lower with exhaustion, it is eventually suffocated. 224

Small birds are driven by dogs into nets set for long distances in the forest, and also spanned or shot. Traps are also set for these smaller animals and for many other small animals, rodents, etc. Birds are shot or trapped. Bird-lime is also employed. It is prepared from the latices of a number of trees by producing the vegetable matter to water, the sticky water so made is applied to sticks or poles. The sticks are placed near drinking places so that the birds alighting to take water become entangled. The poles are offered to trees so that they appear to be the topmost boughs, into the native dress, recognising the common habit of birds to sit on the very top of trees. The strength of the bird-lime is made according to the size of the bird for which to catch. [218]

Fishing. I can not even here for the Yao is a universal fisherman. But long ago he used only a heavy gathered spear to catch his fish. Since then, he has acquired from the Anjoonjo the knowledge of making fish-traps and nets, and of using the fish poison. When the Yao came to live and intermarry among the Anjoonjo, there was one practice of the latter which they applied not adopt and which caused a good deal of ill-feeling. A Shanghaijo man coming home after fishing always used to prepare the fish and, having some ready to cook, he cooked it there for his wife, bringing her some on the same time to cook her family. After eating his own fish, she cooked the rest for her husband. A Yao would never cook for his wife. 225 [219] [220]

Traps. The following is a list of some of the traps I have found in use among the Yao. The sketches will serve to explain their construction better than a lengthy description. Some are very ingeniously made, and most could similar traps made in other parts of the world. 226

1. *Lukwaji kwa kkanda*, a trap for the mouse-rat (Pl. XXII, fig. 1).
2. *Lukwaji kwa nthindi*, a trap for sharp-toothed gnawing animals, so called from

Trapping and catching of animals is pursued with great glee by small boys. They make many of the traps, particularly the two kinds of kites, shipata, shipamba, chikoma, kwena, and ngwa. Lilwa is set in rat-runs and the rats are driven into them (Pl. XII, fig. 4). Digging-out rats is a favorite amusement for the boys and brings meat to the pot. May is the best month for this sport. They are adepts at recognizing burrows which have rats inside. Digging is commenced at one entry to the rat-warren, the assegai holes being closed with tufts of grass. As they get nearer the rat chambers, they smell the earth and so know when they are quite close to the rats. A bunch of grass is then put in this hole, lighted, and kept aglow by blowing on it. One of the rats will try to bolt and is knocked on the head. The head is then smashed to kill him effectually, and the skin of the tail of the first rat is always pulled off the bolt, "so that they may catch many." They will try to guess how many there are going to be, "two and two and five and two!" Each rat when caught is tested under some earth, so that the hunter will not creep down and carry it off. When they have finished one warren, one of the party is appointed to carry all the rats. He ties a string round his waist, and the rats are slipped underneath it and so secured. They then go on to another; the hunter will bear the whole catch for the day and may, before they have finished, have several strings of rats round his body, one above the other.

Digging-out snakes, *ku-hepa nyoka*, is another favorite amusement for children. *Ku-hepa* is to dig up anything (the word which makes a squelching sound). Cranes are never eaten with flesh, but always with mealies, the grain bodies, "snake and kaoma-bread!"

Twelve-and-girls fish with a rod, line, wire hook, and worms, *ku-kapanga nombo*, to pull up fish. They also catch fish, using the fish poisons, *mbizo*. Birds are killed with a bow and a blunt-pointed wooden arrow.

A small boy, seeing a girl or a younger boy with a *nik* of maize and wanting it himself, will say, "Let me make a path to the road!" He will then measure, say a couple of rows of maize grains for himself, mark in the manner of the owner, as "Let me make *dumbo*" (*dumbo* is a shaved head on the ends), or "Let me make the snail's spiral" when two solitary grains are left, surrounded by a simple ring of other grains, as the girl's portion.

Children are taught a little saying about their fingers which reminds one of the "This little pig went to market" of one's infancy. Starting with the little finger, they say:

"*Ukolo kwapoko kwapoko!*"
"The little one (is) the one which cannot have cows!"

Pointing to the ring finger,

"*Kwakulapa ulapwanda!*"
"The little one's brother (is) the one that grabs the cow!"

To the middle finger,

"*Kwapanda nanda nanda!*"
"(The brother of) the one that grabs the cow (is) the one who fetches cow!"

In beasts with branches, or horns are thrown at him. Men join from all the villages. Next day they set out in line towards the nets they have set, the inexperience of the hunt in the middle. Game is driven into the nets by the advancing line of men and their dogs—and is speared. On the other side of the nets are men set as watchers, who should let down the net at the approach of any big antelope, who would otherwise break it. All the game killed is taken back to the bay shot in the horns, who antelope is in the background. At the end of the hunt (sometimes) the headquarters of the hunt chooses his portion after it has all been divided up, and gets a hind leg of every beast killed by the others. The net used is 200 or 400 yards long. Hunting is done in the early morning during the month of July.

The Mahenje and Wangoni did not hunt elephant, but dug game pits. They used bows and arrows. The Ten, Mahenje and Amangoniu, possessing guns in the old days, used to make big hunting parties, staying away two and three months and killing elephant and other game. The hunter inaugurating the hunt had the first shot at an elephant, and all ivory was his till at the camp, where the followers got their proportion of ivories brought back. The skins and horns were divided. The flesh was cut into strips and dried over wood fires. The chief has choice of the biggest tusk on the return of the party to the village. Two elephant were shot in the vicinity of the village, the chief claimed the ground tusk, i.e., the tusk on the side on which the elephant dropped. Before starting on such a hunt the chief would be cast to see that they would have good luck. All those taking part would have "medicine" rubbed into little incisions cut on arms, shoulders, and sometimes on body. Mwalwale (medicine) was also tied on the guns. It consisted sometimes of a number of pieces of wood threaded on a string, or I have seen medicine made of sun-dried animals' blood and charcoal. Should the wife of anyone of the expedition commit adultery her husband might get killed. A man going to hunt will never have intercourse with his wife the night before, otherwise he would be unsuccessful.

Bows and arrows are used, the bows being sometimes about 5 to 6 feet long. The "Mahenje-arrow poison" is employed, and the arrows carry against the left side of the bow. Three kinds of arrows are carried in the same quiver (pouch): ngwalwa, a blunt arrow for stunning birds; nukuta, with a large iron blade; and ngwalwa, with a small pointed head.

The Mahenje use a long-handled, short-bladed spear, usually thrown at a short distance (a few yards), when it is grasped in the hand about the middle. From a further distance (thirty yards) it may be pitched by holding at the extreme end. Traps of various kinds, made of a bent sapling and poles, are commonly used. Dogs are used in hunting to drive, to run down small game and to bring the bigger animals at bay. The only arrow poison used is chenda, made from euphorbia juice and other things; it is used in warfare and elephant hunting. The flesh of animals killed with chenda is not considered safe to eat. Children from twelve years of age accompany their fathers hunting.